

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 01749 090309Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02
SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 NRC-05 PA-01 SIL-01
LAB-04 ISO-00 /144 W
-----025681 091951Z /42

R 090017Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2625
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE
AMCONSUL SYDNEY
AMCONSUL BRISBANE
AMCONSUL PERTH
USDOE GERMANTOWN
USDOE WASHDC
CINCPAC

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USOECD

USIAEA

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, MNUC, ENRG, AS
SUBJECT: MELBOURNE WATERSIDE WORKERS ACCEPT URANIUM

REF: CANBERRA 1161
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PAGE 02 CANBER 01749 090309Z

1. IN A SIGNIFICANT MOVE YESTERDAY, THE MELBURN BRANCH
OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS FEDERATION VOTED BY A RESOUNDING
THREE TO ONE MAJORITY TO ENDORSE THE ACTU'S DECISION ON
HANDLING URANIUM EXPORTS, THUS REMOVING A MAJOR REMAINING
BARRIER TO "YELLOWCAKE" SHIPMENTS, AND INFLICTING A SHARP
REVERSE UPON LEFT-WING MELBOURNE UNION LEADERS WHO HAVE

BEEN AMONG THE MOST VERIFEROUS (AND OCCASIONALLY VIOLENT) FOES OF URANIUM DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA.

2. FROM A "URANIUM" STANDPOINT, THE MELBOURNE WWF MOVE IS A BENCHMARK IN THE INCREASING ACCEPTANCE BY AUSTRALIANS THAT THE WORLD HAS INDEED MOVED INTO THE NUCLEAR AGE, AND THEIR CHOICE IS TO "OP IN." A RECENT SURVEY, CONDUCTED BY AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL OPINION POLLS (ANOP) FOR THE JAPANESE, TURNED UP THE STARTLING FACT THAT 53 PERCENT OF AUSTRALIANS NOW SUPPORT URANIUM DEVELOPMENT, WITH ONLY 34 PERCENT OPPOSED. THIS MARKS A FAIRLY EVENLY DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE.

3. FROM A "LABOR" STANDPOINT, THE MELBOURNE WWF VOTE MARKS YET ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF IMPORTANT SHIFTS BY WORKERS TO REJECT THE APPEALS OF LEFT-WING IDEOLOGUES WHO HAVE HITHERTO EXERCISED

A DISPROPORTIONATE INFLUENCE IN THE UNION MOVEMENT. BRANCH SECRETARY TED BULL VACATED HIS CHAIR TO SPEAK AGAINST ACTU POLICY AND REPEAT HIS INSISTENCE UPON A TOTAL BAN AGAINST HANDLING URANIUM. THE 1800 MEN WHO ATTENDED THE BRANCH MEETING IN MELBOURNE, HOWEVER, OVERWHELMINGLY CHOSE TO BACK ACTU POLICY. THE HARD CORE ANTI-URANIUM FORCES CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO KICK UP A FUSS WHENEVER THEY CAN, AND ISOLATED UNIONS MAY CAUSE LOCAL PROBLEMS, BUT THE MAJOR BATTLE NOW APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN WON.
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PAGE 03 CANBER 01749 090309Z

4. THE FEDERAL SECRETARY OF THE WWF, CHARLIE FITZGIBBON, WAS QUOTED IN SYDNEY BY THE PRESS AFTER THE MELBOURNE DECISION AS SAYING "THE MATTER WAS THOROUGHLY VENTILATED AT THE MEETING, AND MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION HAVE NOW CLEARLY INDICATED THEIR POSITIONS. THE ACTU DECISION NOW BECOMES FEDERATION POLICY, TO BE CARRIED OUT BY ALL BRANCHES." IN CASE THERE WAS ANY REMAINING DOUBT ABOUT THE MELBOURNE APPLICATION OF THE DECISION, THE MELBOURNE WWF BRANCH ACTING SECRETARY, MICK O'NEILL, SAID THAT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED THAT THE UNION SHOULD MAKE ITS LABOR AVAILABLE "TO FACILITATE THE HONORING OF EXISTING EXPORT CONTRACTS" FROM THE MARY KATHLEEN MINE OUTPUT AND THE GOA STOCKPILE AT LUCAS HEIGHTS.

5. IN A RELATED MOVE (REPORTED SEPT 1974), PERHAPS INTENDED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GROWING MOVEMENT TOWARDS NORMALIZATION OF URANIUM HANDLING, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER (AND MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES) DOUG ANTHONY IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID YESTERDAY THAT PRODUCTION AT MARY KATHLEEN AND EXISTING GOA STOCKS OF YELLOWCAKE AT LUCAS HEIGHTS WERE PROBABLY INSUFFICIENT TO HONOR EXISTING CONTRACTS AND IT WOULD THEREFORE BE

NECESSARY TO PROCEED WITH DEVELOPMENT OF AT LEAST TWO
NEW ADDITIONAL AUSTRALIAN URANIUM PROJECTS AT THE START
OF THE 1980S.
ALSTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: URANIUM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CANBER01749
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780106-0836
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA OECD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780389/aaaacxgo.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d706d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 CANBERRA 1161
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3391651
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MELBOURNE WATERSIDE WORKERS ACCEPT URANIUM
TAGS: ELAB, MNUC, ENRG, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d706d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014